Charles Bolden, NASA Administrator

OFCM: 50 Years of Federal Coordination

Silver Spring, MD

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Good morning. I want to first thank Sam Williamson for that gracious introduction, for his outstanding leadership and for giving us this opportunity to look back at 50 years of accomplishments as we look forward to an even brighter future. Thank you to Representative Chaka Fattah for joining us this morning and for your support of NASA and NOAA as the Ranking Member of the House Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittee. I also want to commend your leadership in Congress on the issue of STEM education. And of course, none of us would be here this morning if it were not for the outstanding leadership of NOAA's Acting Administrator, former NASA astronaut and twice my fellow shuttle crewmember, Dr. Kathryn Sullivan.

Sam Williamson's full title is Federal Coordinator for Meteorological Services and Supporting Research. That's a long title for a big job. Some would even argue that not even Atlas, the Greek God of Earth and sky, would have the strength to balance the missions and priorities of 15 Federal agencies. But Sam has big shoulders. And he stands on big shoulders too – none more sturdy than those of the man we are honoring today, the legendary Dr. Robert M. White, the nation's first Federal Coordinator for Meteorology and first Administrator of NOAA.

With Dr. White's vision as our guide, for the past half-century, we have worked together to monitor and mitigate the human and economic impacts of violent weather and other potentially hazardous atmospheric conditions. We share some simple, but high goals: save lives, expand the boundaries of science, strengthen our economy and improve environmental decision-making here in American and around the world.

This is work of which we should all be proud…and it is work that is absolutely critical to maintaining and improving life in America and life on Earth as we know it.

NASA is proud of the role we have played in this 50-year partnership, beginning with the launch of our first space-based weather satellite, TIROS-1, in 1960. Today Earth Science remains one of our top priorities. Using satellites, aircraft, and unmanned aerial vehicles, NASA collects and provides a wide range of Earth observations and data to researchers, scientists, and the public.

Our Earth Sciences Division fosters groundbreaking research on Earth's climate, land surface and biosphere and how they change in response to natural and human-induced changes. NASA and NOAA are continuing our 40-plus-year partnership in developing the Nation's next generation polar and geosynchronous weather satellites.

To further this partnership, NASA established the Joint Agency Satellite Division (JASD) in 2010 to ensure sound program management and overall mission success for our satellite projects with our federal partners, including NOAA's portfolio of meteorological and space weather satellites. This partnership has achieved some remarkable successes, including the successful launch of the Suomi-NPP satellite with a suite of advanced instruments. Data products derived from these instruments have already been assimilated into NOAA national Weather Service's numerical weather prediction model to improve weather forecasting, and warnings of high-impact weather events 3 to 8 days in advance to protect lives, properties, and our nation's economy. In addition, near real time data products from NASA satellites are used for tornado warning, forest and brush fire management, and hurricane, flood and earthquake disaster monitoring efforts at NOAA and other federal agencies.

Finally, let me say that this past June I was honored to speak at OFCM's 2013 Space Weather Enterprise Forum here in Silver Spring. In addition to our partnership on Earth weather, NASA is also proud to work alongside many of you as a member of OFCM's National Space Weather Program. NOAA established this federal interagency initiative in 1994 to improve the Nation's capability to make timely and reliable predictions of significant disturbances in space weather, and to help protect critical societal infrastructure, including communication and navigation. Our focus on space weather will also help us mitigate the dangers of radiation and other phenomena as we send humans farther into the solar system than ever before, including our planned mission to Mars. We are making major advances with this partnership.

Our interagency efforts have strengthened our nation's indispensable meteorological capabilities that protect us from dangerous weather on Earth and the potential dangers of weather in space.

This collaboration is a model of Federal teamwork and proof of the indispensable role of government in service to the common good. Congratulations on 50 years of coordination. Together, we are making a big difference. Thank you.